

(12) **United States Patent**  
**Smith**

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 9,128,157 B2**  
(45) **Date of Patent:** **Sep. 8, 2015**

(54) **SURFACE SCANNING RADIO FREQUENCY  
ANTENNA FOR MAGNETIC RESONANCE  
FORCE MICROSCOPY**

(56) **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

6,181,131 B1 \* 1/2001 Bruland et al. .... 324/300  
2013/0193970 A1 \* 8/2013 Alexson et al. .... 324/309

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

"An Optimal Magnetic Tip Configuration for Magnetic-Resonance Force Microscopy of Microscale Binned Features", John A. Marohn and Raul Fainchtein, John Hopkins University, Applied Physics Laboratory, Laurel MD, and Doran D. Smith, U.S. Army Research Laboratories, Adelphi, MD, vol. 73, No. 25, Dec. 21, 1998, pp. 3778-3780.  
"Detailed Description of a Compact Cryogenic Magnetic Resonance Force Microscope", Doran D. Smith and John A. Marohn. U.S. Army Research Laboratory, Adelphi, MD and Center for Superconductivity Research, Department of Physics, University of Maryland, College Park, MD, and Lee E. Harrell, Department of Physics, United States Military Academy, West Point, NY, vol. 72, No. 4 Apr. 2001, pp. 2080-2089.

\* cited by examiner

*Primary Examiner* — Louis Arana

(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Alan I. Kalb

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A probe for scanning a surface of an arbitrarily sized sample in magnetic resonance force microscopy comprising a magnetic sensor having a support element coupled to a magnetic particle, an RF antenna, at least partially circumscribing the magnetic sensor, for emitting an RF magnetic field across a portion of the sample and an optical sensor, positioned proximate the magnetic sensor, for detecting displacement of the support element.

**20 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets**

(75) Inventor: **Doran Smith**, Rockville, MD (US)

(73) Assignee: **The United States of America as  
represented by the Secretary of the  
Army**, Washington, DC (US)

(\*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 747 days.

(21) Appl. No.: **13/361,056**

(22) Filed: **Jan. 30, 2012**

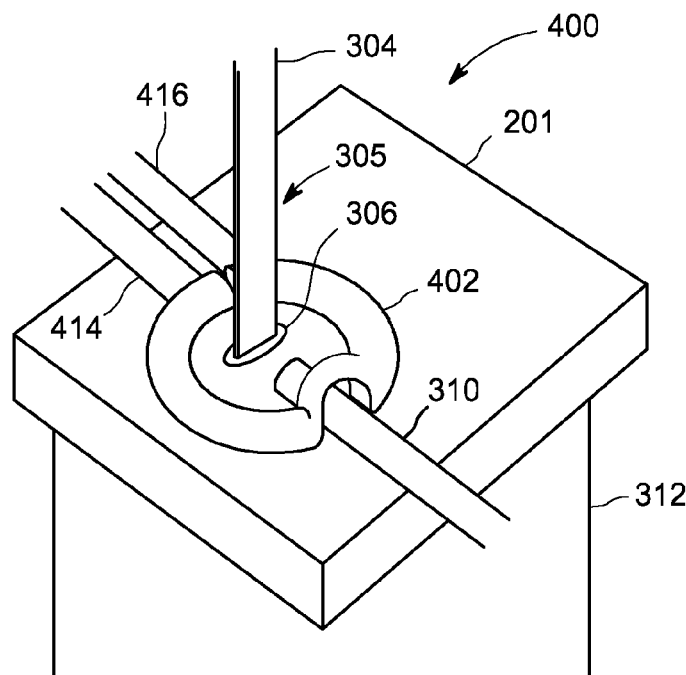
(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2013/0193963 A1 Aug. 1, 2013

(51) **Int. Cl.**  
**G01V 3/00** (2006.01)  
**G01R 33/341** (2006.01)  
**G01Q 60/52** (2010.01)  
**G01R 33/32** (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**  
CPC ..... **G01R 33/341** (2013.01); **G01Q 60/52**  
(2013.01); **G01R 33/323** (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**  
CPC ..... G01Q 60/52  
USPC ..... 324/318, 321, 322, 300  
See application file for complete search history.



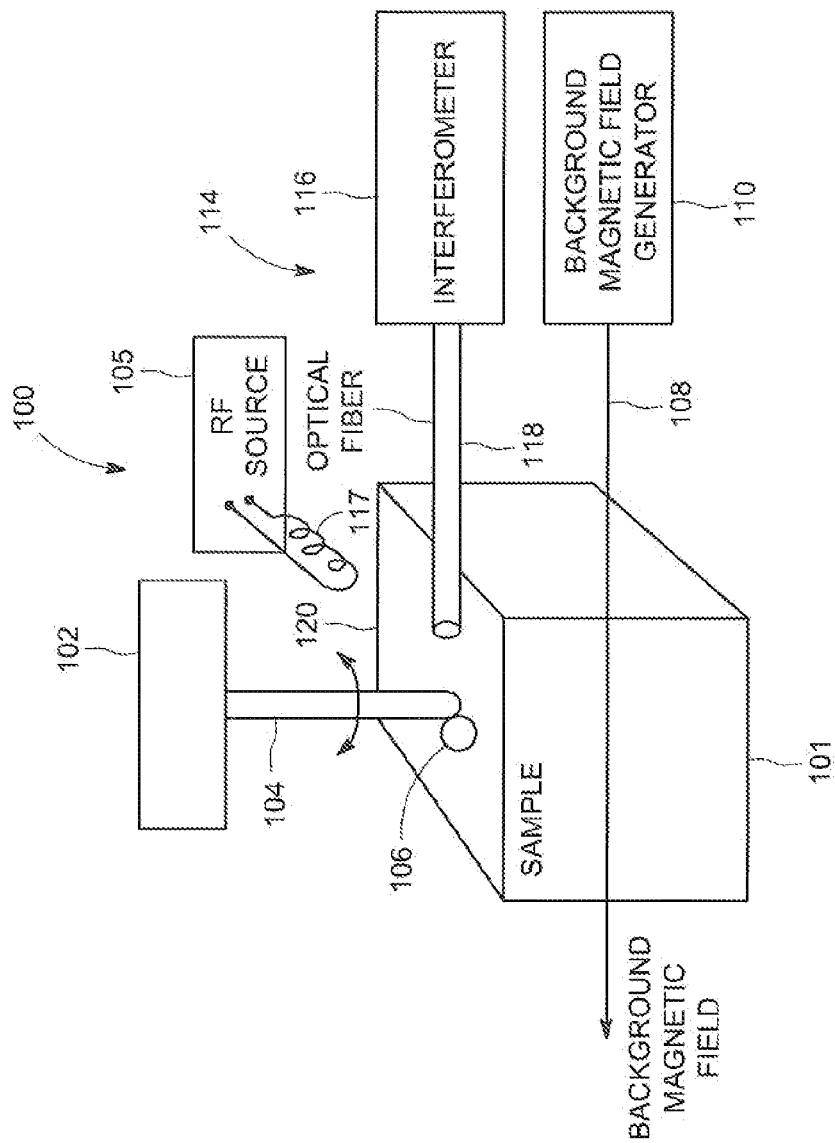


FIG. 1

PRIOR ART

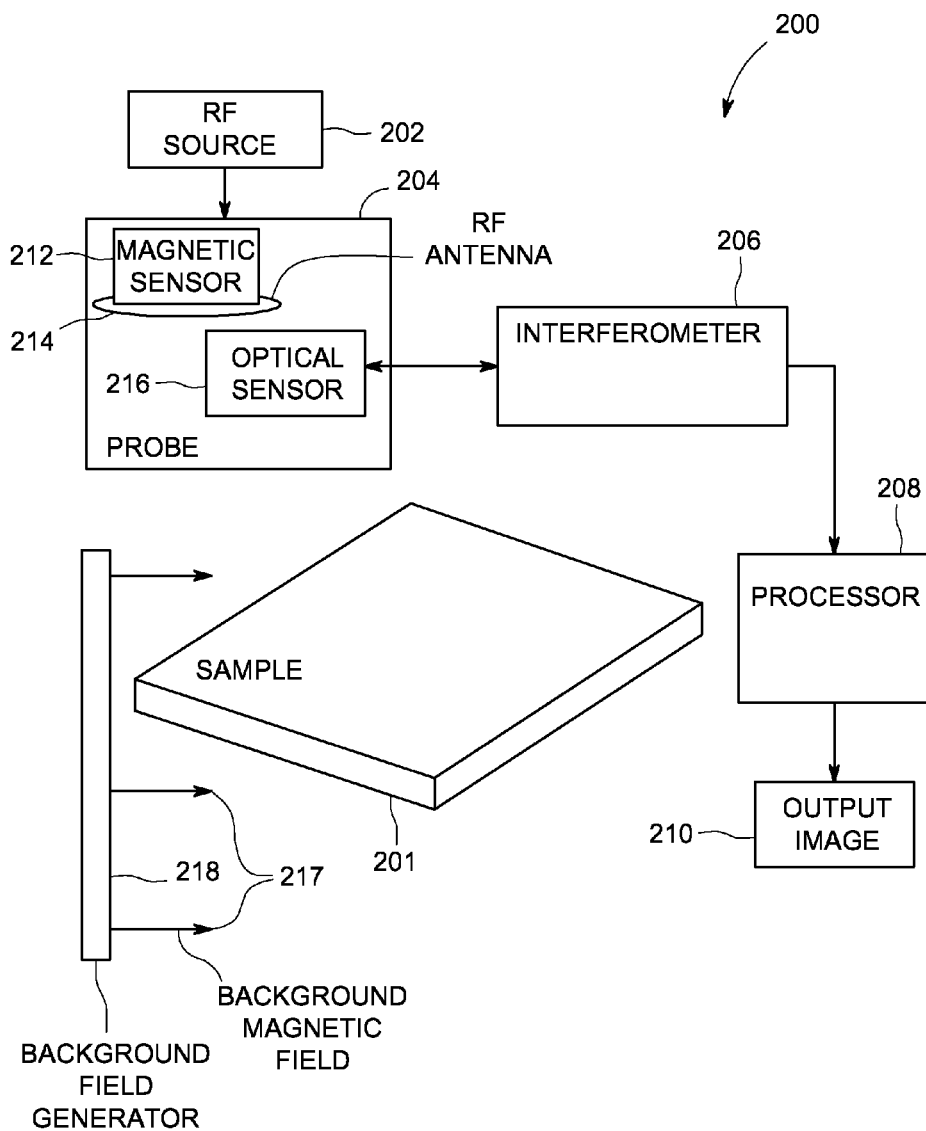


FIG. 2

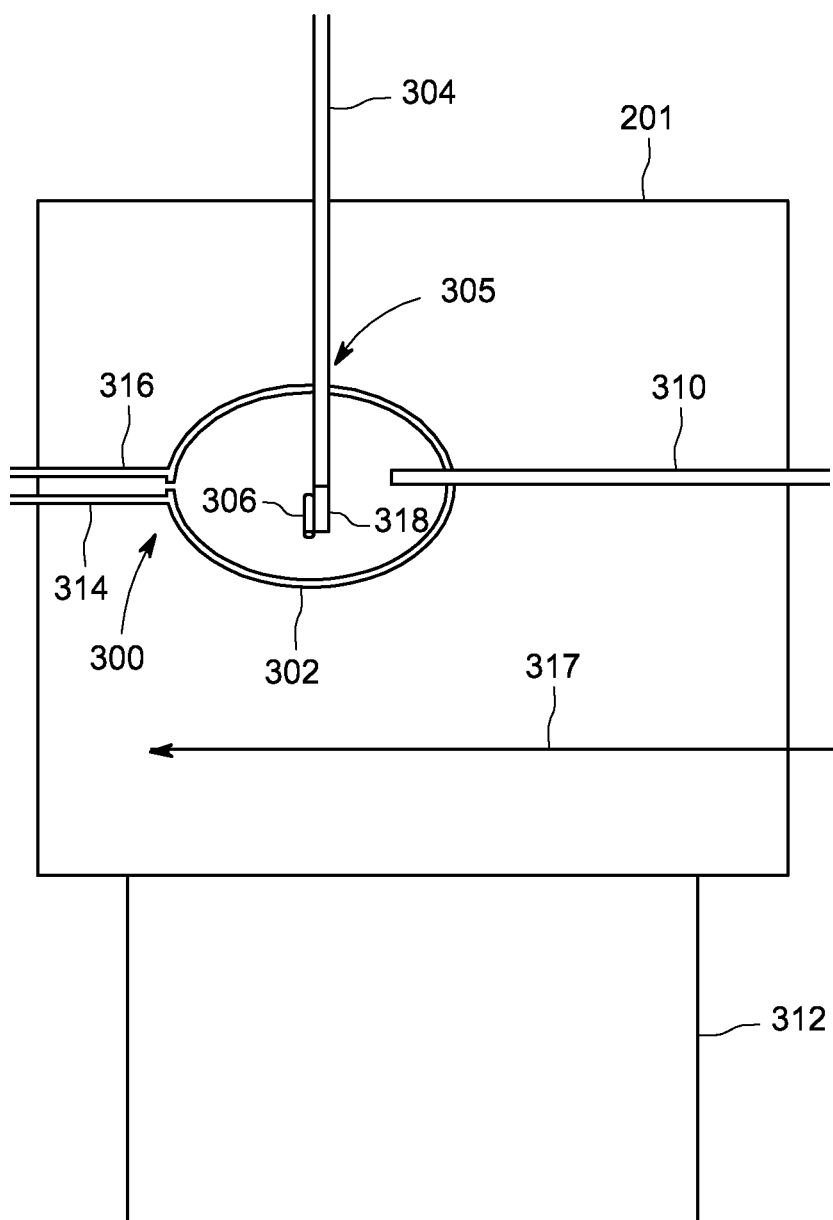


FIG. 3

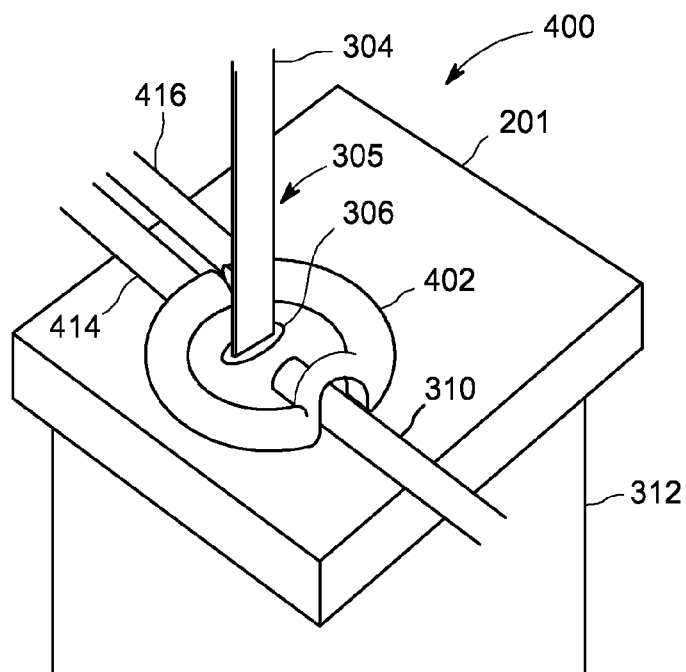


FIG. 4

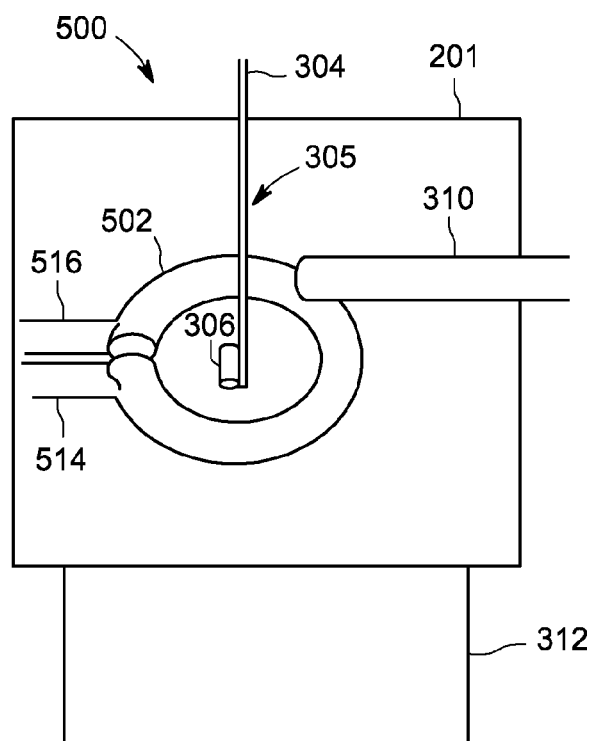


FIG. 5

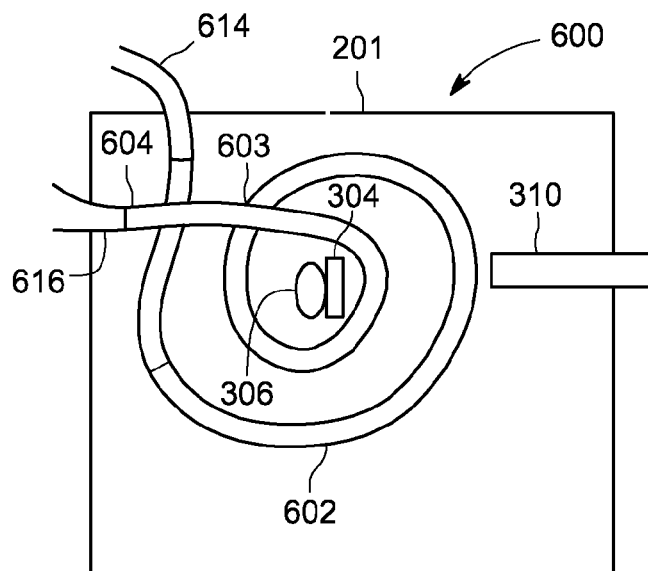


FIG. 6

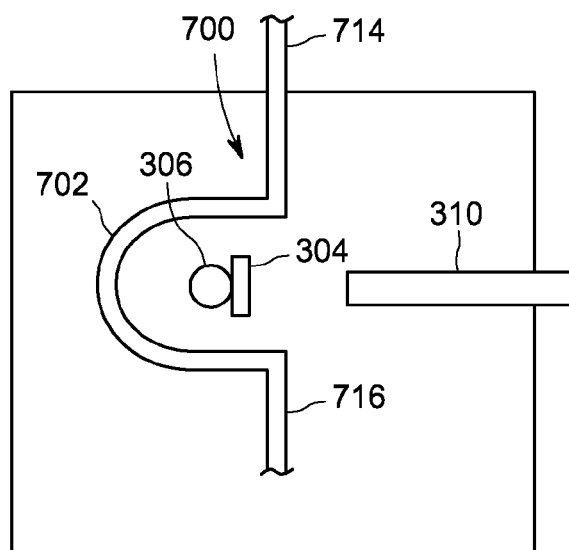


FIG. 7

1

# **SURFACE SCANNING RADIO FREQUENCY ANTENNA FOR MAGNETIC RESONANCE FORCE MICROSCOPY**

GOVERNMENT INTEREST

The invention described herein may be manufactured, used and licensed by or for the U.S. Government.

## FIELD OF INVENTION

Embodiments of the present invention generally relate to magnetic imaging and, more particularly, to a surface scanning radio frequency antenna for magnetic resonance force microscopy.

## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Magnetic resonance force microscopy (MRFM) is an imaging technique that acquires magnetic resonance images (MRI) at nanometer scales, and possibly at atomic scales in the future. An MRFM system comprises a probe, method of applying a background magnetic field, electronics, and optics. The system measures variations in the resonant frequency of a cantilever or variations in the amplitude of an oscillating cantilever. The changes in the characteristic of the cantilever being monitored are indicative of the tomography of the sample. More specifically, as depicted in FIG. 1, an MRFM probe **100** comprises a base **102** with a cantilever **104** tipped with a magnetic (for example, Samarium cobalt) particle **106** to resonate as the spin of the electrons or nuclei in the sample **101** are reversed. There is a background magnetic field **108** generated by a background magnetic field generator **110** which creates a uniform background magnetic field in the sample **101**. As the magnetic tip **106** moves close to the sample **101**, the atoms' electrons or nuclear spins become attracted (force detection) to the tip and generate a small force on the cantilever **104**. Using a radio frequency (RF) magnetic field applied by an RF antenna/wire coil **117** through the RF source **105**, the spins are then repeatedly flipped at the cantilever's resonant frequency, causing the cantilever **104** to oscillate at its resonant frequency. In the geometry shown, springiness preservation by aligning magnetization (SPAM), when the cantilever **104** oscillates, the magnetic particle's **106** magnetic moment remains parallel to the background magnetic field **108**, and thus it experiences no torque. The displacement of the cantilever is measured with an optical sensor **114** comprised of an interferometer (laser beam) **116** and an optical fiber **118** to create a series of 2-D images of the sample **101** held by sample stage **120**, which are combined to generate a 3-D image. The interferometer measures the time dependent displacement of the cantilever **104**. Smaller ferromagnetic particles and softer cantilevers increase the signal to noise ratio of the sensor. Current magnetic resonance force microscopy probes are limited to small samples due to probe geometries, where the radio frequency (RF) magnetic field is applied by a wire coil **117** positioned at an edge **120** of the sample **101**. Because the wire coil **117** must be positioned at the edge **120** of the sample **101**, the probe can only measure the topography near the edge or on a small sample.

Therefore, there is a need in the art for probe for magnetic resonance force microscopy in a more flexible manner for scanning arbitrarily large samples not limited to the edge of samples.

## BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Embodiments of the present invention relate to a probe for scanning a surface of an arbitrarily sized sample in magnetic

2

resonance force microscopy comprising a magnetic sensor having a support element coupled to a magnetic particle; an RF antenna, at least partially circumscribing the magnetic sensor, for emitting an RF magnetic field across a portion of the sample; and an optical sensor, positioned proximate the magnetic sensor, for detecting displacement of the support element.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

So that the manner in which the above recited features of the present invention can be understood in detail, a more particular description of the invention, briefly summarized above, may be had by reference to embodiments, some of which are illustrated in the appended drawings. It is to be noted, however, that the appended drawings illustrate only typical embodiments of this invention and are therefore not to be considered limiting of its scope, for the invention may admit to other equally effective embodiments.

FIG. 1 depicts a conventional MRFM system known to those of ordinary skill in the art;

FIG. 2 depicts a block diagram of an MRFM system in accordance with an exemplary embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 3 is an illustration depicting a probe in accordance with an exemplary embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 4 is a three-quarters view of a modified probe in accordance with an exemplary embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 5 is an illustration of a modified probe in accordance with another exemplary embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 6 is a top-down illustration of a modified probe in accordance with another exemplary embodiment of the present invention; and

FIG. 7 is a top-down, illustration of a modified probe in accordance with another exemplary embodiment of the present invention.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Embodiments of the present invention comprise a probe for use in magnetic resonance force microscopy (MRFM). Embodiments of the probe may be used in an MRFM technique known as Springiness Preservation by Aligning Magnetization (SPAM). By adopting the SPAM geometry and using a new probe geometry, accurate scanning of arbitrarily sized samples is achieved, not limited to scanning the edges of a sample.

FIG. 2 depicts a block diagram of an MRFM system **200** in accordance with an exemplary embodiment of the present invention. The system **200** generally has an RF source **202** coupled to a probe **204**. The probe **204** is coupled to an interferometer **206** for performing optical measurements using the optical sensor **216** in the probe **204** of sample **201**. The interferometer **206** transmits the measurements to a processor **208**. The processor **208** generates an output image **210** based on the measurements or oscillations of portions of the probe **204**. The probe **204** comprises a magnetic sensor **212**, an RF antenna **214** and an optical sensor **216**. The apparatus **200** is kept in a spatially homogeneous background magnetic field **217** (approximately 9 T) generated by a background magnetic field generator **218**. In an exemplary embodiment, the background magnetic field, generator **218** comprises two one inch diameter Samarium Cobalt (SmCo) magnets. In an exemplary embodiment, the magnetic sensor **212** is comprised of a bridge coupled with a smaller SmCo particle (for example, 10  $\mu\text{m}$  in diameter) which generates a spatially

3

inhomogeneous field. The magnetic field experienced at a particular point in the sample **201** is the sum of the background magnetic field and the magnetic field generated by the magnetic sensor **212**. The RF antenna **214** at least partially circumscribes the magnetic sensor **212**. The RF antenna **214** generates an RF magnetic field which causes the spin in the particles of the sample **201** to reverse and oppose the SmCo particle on the bridge of the magnetic sensor **212**. This repeated reversal of the spin of the particles in sample **201** causes the magnetic sensor **212** to oscillate at a particular frequency. The interferometer **206** senses oscillation of the magnetic sensor **212** using optical sensor **216** by using optical fiber **217** to reflect a laser off of the magnetic sensor **212**. In another exemplary embodiment, the sample **201** is directly coupled to the bridge comprising the magnetic sensor **212** and a magnetic particle array of SmCo particles is proximate the magnetic sensor **212**. According to an exemplary embodiment, the optical fiber **118** is 125 microns in diameter and is within approximately  $\frac{1}{10}$  of a millimeter of the magnetic sensor **212**. In an exemplary embodiment, the optical sensor **216** is an optical fiber approximately twenty five times greater in diameter than the width of the bridge of the magnetic sensor **212**. The gap between the optical fiber and the magnetic sensor **212** is fixed at a particular distance in this embodiment.

FIG. 3 is an illustration depicting a probe **300** in accordance with an exemplary embodiment of the present invention. The probe **300** comprises an RF antenna **302** formed as a circular wire circumscribing a magnetic sensor **305**. The magnetic sensor **105** comprises a support element **304** and a magnetic particle **306** at its tip **318**. The support element **304** may be a bridge, cantilever, or other structure that resonates. A cantilever is shown with, in an exemplary embodiment, an approximately 100  $\mu\text{N/m}$  (micro-Newtons per meter) spring constant, a mechanical Q of about 10,000-100,000 and a resonance frequency of about 1000 Hz. In this exemplary embodiment, the cantilever is made of silicon using a micro-electromechanical systems (MEMS) fabrication process. The RF antenna **302** is positioned above sample **201**, by, for example, a distance of 0.5  $\mu\text{m}$ . Above the sample **308**, the optical sensor **310** emits light onto the support element **304**, which oscillates in the field perpendicular to the background magnetic field **317**, generated by the background magnetic field generator **218** shown in FIG. 2. The RF antenna **302** creates an RF signal that permeates the sample **201**, altering the spin of particles in the sample **201**. The spin changes alternatively oppose and attract the particle **306** causing the magnetic sensor **305** to resonate by displacing the support element **304**. In an exemplary embodiment, the RF antenna **302** generates an RF signal of 50 MHz to 380 MHz. The displacement of the support element **304** is measured by the optical sensor **310**. The sample **108** is positionable with respect to the alignments of the RF antenna **102**, the support element **304** and the optical fiber **310**, by the use of a sample stage **312**, as described in commonly assigned U.S. Patent Application Ser. No. 13/361,223, hereby incorporated by reference. The RF antenna **302**, the support element **304** and the optical fiber **310** are positioned statically with respect to each other. The RF antenna **302** is closer to the sample **201** than it would be in otherwise different geometries because it is not constrained to the edge of the geometry; causing a larger RF magnetic field to radiate through the sample **201**.

The RF antenna **302** produces both RF magnetic field and RF electric fields. Typically, MRFM uses the RF magnetic field to oscillate the spin of atoms in the sample. The RF electric field is undesired in MRFM because it causes transients in the magnetic sensor **305** oscillation frequency and/or

4

the position of the support element **304**. The RF electric field along the axis of an ideal loop antenna is zero. The support element **304** and the magnetic particle **306** are then located in a much stronger RF magnetic field than in conventional MRFM systems. In an exemplary embodiment the RF antenna **302**, the antenna has a nearly circular shape with a small gap at which the input lead **314** and the output lead **316** extend outwards on the same plane. In other embodiments, the leads **314** and **316** extend downward or in another direction. In yet another embodiment, the RF antenna **302** does not have extended leads, but receives RF power through an inductive coupling to another segment of nearby wire (not shown).

FIG. 4 is a three-quarters view of a modified probe **400** in accordance with an exemplary embodiment of the present invention. In exemplary embodiments, the RF antenna **402** is thicker than that shown in FIG. 3, and may not fit under the optical fiber **310** without touching the sample **201**. In this embodiment, the RF antenna **402** is formed as a coil that is looped up and over the optical fiber **310** and the leads **414** and **416** lead to an RF source. The loop **403** causes a small distortion in the magnetic field created in the area of the sample directly underneath the antenna **402** and is accounted for during measurement processing.

FIG. 5 is an illustration of a modified probe **500** in accordance with another exemplary embodiment of the present invention. In this geometry, the RF antenna **502**, with leads **514** and **516**, does not have a loop **403** as shown in FIG. 4, but the RF antenna **502** is also shown in a thicker embodiment where the optical fiber **310** will not fit underneath without touching the sample **168**. Therefore, in this embodiment, the optical fiber **310** is raised above the RF antenna **502**, avoiding any distortions created in the magnetic field by using a non-uniform antenna structure. In another embodiment, the optical fiber **310** is in the plane of the antenna, located between the leads **314** and **316**.

FIG. 6 is a top-down illustration of a modified probe **600** in accordance with another exemplary embodiment of the present invention. In this embodiment, RF antenna **602**, with leads **614** and **616**, is coiled over itself and around the magnetic sensor **305**. In an exemplary embodiment, the upper coil of RF antenna **602** is raised at section **603** above the lower coil of RF antenna **602** and lowered at section **604**. In other embodiments, one portion of the RF antenna **602** is lowered at section **603** underneath the other portion and raised again at section **604**. The coiling of RF antenna **602** (e.g., using more than one turn of the coil) increases the magnetic field in the sample **201** and allows for better inversion of spin of the particles in the sample **201**. The coiling of RF antenna **602** results in a more accurate MRFM image of the structure of the sample **201**. Optionally, the fiber **310** can be located above, below or between the coils.

FIG. 7 is a top-down illustration of a modified probe **700** in accordance with another exemplary embodiment of the present invention. Sample **201** is placed below RF antenna **702**, with leads **714** and **716**, where the support element **304** tipped with a magnetic particle **306** is placed in the RF magnetic field of the RF antenna **702** and the optical fiber **310** detects small displacements in the support element **304**. In this embodiment, the RF antenna **702** is in a horseshoe shape. In this configuration, the optical fiber is avoided completely due to the shape of the antenna. The RF antenna **702** also avoids the problem of creating a distorted magnetic field in the sample **201** by doubling over itself or creating a loop over the optical fiber **310** as in other geometries.

In any of the foregoing embodiments, the sample and the magnetic particle can be swapped, such that the sample is



5

coupled to the cantilever and the magnetic particle is replaced with a single particle or an array of magnetic particles secured to a moveable stage.

The foregoing description, for purpose of explanation, has been described with reference to specific embodiments. However, the illustrative discussions above are not intended to be exhaustive or to limit the invention to the precise forms disclosed. Many modifications and variations are possible in view of the above teachings. The embodiments were chosen and described in order to best explain the principles of the present disclosure and its practical applications, to thereby enable others skilled in the art to best utilize the invention and various embodiments with various modifications as may be suited to the particular use contemplated.

Various elements, devices, modules and circuits are described above in association with their respective functions. These elements, devices, modules and circuits are considered means for performing their respective functions as described herein. While the foregoing is directed to embodiments of the present invention, other and further embodiments of the invention may be devised without departing from the basic scope thereof, and the scope thereof is determined by the claims that follow.

The invention claimed is:

1. A probe for scanning a surface of an arbitrarily sized sample in magnetic resonance force microscopy comprising:

a magnetic sensor having a support element coupled to a magnetic particle;

an RF antenna, at least partially circumscribing the magnetic sensor, for emitting an RF magnetic field across a portion of the sample; and

an optical sensor, positioned proximate the magnetic sensor, for detecting displacement of the support element.

2. The probe of claim 1 wherein the RF antenna forms a nearly closed loop of wire circumscribing the magnetic sensor.

3. The probe of claim 1 wherein the RF antenna forms one or more coils over itself circumscribing the magnetic sensor.

4. The probe of claim 1 wherein the optical sensor is located below or above the RF antenna.

5. The probe of claim 2 wherein the RF antenna contains a raised semi-circle loop for accommodating the optical sensor on the same plane as the portion of the RF antenna which is not raised.

6. The probe of claim 1 wherein the RF antenna forms a semi-circle around the magnetic sensor for allowing the optical sensor to be positioned on the same plane as the RF antenna.

7. The probe of claim 1 wherein the RF antenna has a round cross-section.

8. The probe of claim 1 wherein the RF antenna has a cross-section with four or more sides.

6

9. The probe of claim 1 wherein the support element is coupled to the sample instead of the magnetic particle and the probe further comprises one or more magnetic particles.

10. The probe of claim 1 wherein the magnetic sensor is a resonant moveable element with the magnetic particle coupled to a tip of the resonant moveable element.

11. The probe of claim 10 wherein the magnetic particle is one of a ferro-magnetic, para-magnetic, or superpara-magnetic particle.

12. The probe of claim 10 wherein the resonant moveable element is a bridge or cantilever.

13. A system for magnetic resonance force microscopy comprising:

a probe for scanning a surface of an arbitrarily sized sample comprising:

a magnetic sensor having a support element coupled to a magnetic particle;

an RF antenna, at least partially circumscribing the magnetic sensor, for emitting an RF magnetic field across a portion of the sample; and

an optical sensor, positioned proximate the magnetic sensor, for detecting displacement of the support element;

an interferometer for measuring small displacements in the magnetic sensor;

an RF source for pulsing RF signals through the sample; and

a magnetic field source for generating a background magnetic field for the probe.

14. The system of claim 13 wherein the RF antenna forms a nearly closed loop of wire circumscribing the magnetic sensor.

15. The system of claim 13 wherein the RF antenna forms one or more coils over itself circumscribing the magnetic sensor.

16. The system of claim 13 wherein the optical sensor is located below or above the RF antenna.

17. The system of claim 14 wherein the RF antenna contains a raised semi-circle loop for accommodating the optical sensor on the same plane as the portion of the RF antenna which is not raised.

18. The system of claim 13 wherein the RF antenna forms a semi-circle around the magnetic sensor for allowing the optical sensor to be positioned on the same plane as the RF antenna.

19. The system of claim 13 wherein the support element is coupled to the sample instead of the magnetic particle and the probe further comprises one or more magnetic particles.

20. The system of claim 13 wherein the magnetic sensor is a resonant moveable element with one or more magnetic particle coupled to a tip of the resonant moveable element.

\* \* \* \* \*